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True and false society

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TRUE AND FALSE SOCIETY

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BY

WILLIAM MORRIS

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TRUE AND FALSE SOCIETY.

I HAVE been asked to give you the Socialist view of the Labour Question. Now in some ways that is a difficult matter to deal with—far beyond my individual capacities—and would also be a long business; yet in another way, as a matter of principle, it is not difficult to understand or long to tell of, and does not need previous study or acquaintance with the works of specialists or philosophers. Indeed, if it did, it would not be a political subject, and I hope to show you that it is pre-eminently political in the sense in which I should use the word; that is to say, it is a matter which concerns everyone, and has to do with the practical everyday relations of his life, and that not only as an individual, but as a member of a body corporate, nay, as a member of that great corporation—humanity. Thus considered, it would be hard indeed if it could not be understood readily by a person of ordinary intelligence who can bring his mind to bear upon it without prejudice. Such a person can learn the basis of the opinion in even an hour's talk, if the matter be clearly put before him. It is my task to attempt this; and whether I fail or succeed, I can at least promise you to use no technical phrases which would require explanation; nor will I, as far as I can help, go into any speculative matter, but will be as plain and practical as I can be.

Yet I must warn you that you may be disappointed when you find that I have no elaborate plan, no details of a new society to lay before you, that to my mind to attempt this would be putting before you a mere delusion. What I ask you to consider is in the main the clearing away of obstacles that stand in the way of the due and unwasteful use of labour—a task not light indeed, nor to be accomplished without the most strenuous effort in the teeth of violent resistance, but yet not impossible for humanity as we know it, and as I firmly believe not only necessary, but, as things now are, the one thing essential to be undertaken.

Now you all know that, taking mankind as a whole, it is necessary for man to labour in order to live. Certainly not all things that we enjoy are the works of man's labour; the beauty of the earth, and the action of nature on our sensations, are always here for us to enjoy, but we can only do so on the terms of our keeping ourselves alive and in good case by means of

335
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labour, and no inventions can set aside that necessity. The merest savage has to pluck the berry from the tree, or dig up the root from the ground before he can enjoy his dog-like sleep in sun or shade; and there are no savages who have not got beyond that stage; while the progressive races of mankind have for many ages got a very long way beyond it, so that we have no record of any time when they had not formed some sort of society, whose aim was to make the struggle with nature for subsistence less hard than it otherwise would have been, to win a more abundant livelihood from her.

We cannot deal at any length with the historical development of society; our object is simply to inquire into the constitution of that final development of society under which we live. But one may first ask a few questions:—1st, Since the community generally must labour in order that the individuals composing it may subsist, and labour harder in order that they may attain further advantages, ought not a really successful community so to arrange that labour that each capable person should do a fair share of it and no more? 2nd, Should not a really successful community—established surely for the benefit of all its members—arrange that everyone who did his due share of labour should have his due share of the wealth earned by that labour? 3rd, If any labour were wasted, such waste would throw an additional burden on those who produced what was necessary and pleasant to existence. Should not a successful community, therefore, so organise its labour that it should not be wasted? You must surely answer Yes to each of these three questions. I will assert, then, that a successful society—a society which fulfilled its true functions—would take care that each did his due share of labour, that each had his due share of wealth resulting from that labour, and that the labour of persons generally was not wasted. I ask you to remember those three essentials of a successful society throughout all that follows; and to let me apply them now as a test of success to the society in which we live, the latest development of so many ages of the struggle with nature, our elaborate and highly-organised civilisation.

In our society, does each capable person do his fair share of labour? Is his share of the wealth produced proportionate to his labour? Is the waste of labour avoided in our society?

You may perhaps hesitate in your answer to the third question · you cannot hesitate to say No to the two first. I think, however, I shall be able to show you that much labour is wasted, and that, therefore, our society fails in the three essentials necessary for a successful society. Our civilisation, therefore, though

Econ. & Pol. Sci. Ex

elaborate and highly organised, is a failure; that is, supposing it to be the final development of society, as some people, nay, most people, suppose it to be.

Now a few words as to the course of events which have brought us to the society of the present day. In periods almost before the dawn of continuous history the early progressive races from which we are descended were divided into clans or families, who held their wealth, such as it was, in common within the clan, while all outside the clan was hostile, and wealth not belonging to the clan was looked upon as prize of war. There was consequently continual fighting of clan with clan, and at first all enemies taken in war were slain. But after a while, as man progressed and got defter with his hands, and learned how to make more effective tools, it began to be found out that, so working, each man could do more than merely sustain himself; and then some of the prisoners of war, instead of being slain on the field, were made slaves of; they had become valuable for work, like horses. Out of the work they produced their masters or owners gave them sustenance enough to live on, and took the rest for themselves. Time passed, and the complexity of society grew; the early barbarism passed through many stages into the ancient civilisations, of which Greece and Rome were the great representatives; but this civilisation was still founded on slave labour. Most of its wealth was created by men who could be sold in the market like cattle. But as the old civilisations began to decay, this slave labour became unprofitable; the countries comprised in the Roman Empire were disturbed by constant war; the governments, both central and provincial, became mere tax-gathering machines, and grew so greedy that things became unbearable. Society became a mere pretext for tax-gathering, and fell to pieces, and chattel slavery fell with it, since under all these circumstances slaves were no longer valuable.

Then came another change. A new society was formed, partly out of the tribes of barbarians who had invaded the Roman Empire, and partly out of the fragments of that empire itself; the feudal system arose, bearing with it new ideas, which I have not time to deal with here and now. Suffice it to say that in its early days mere chattel slavery gave place to serfdom. Powerful men, privileged men, had not forgotten that men can produce more by a day's labour than will keep them alive for a day; so now they settled their labourers on certain portions of land, stocked their land with them, in fact, and on these lands they had leave to live as well as they might on the condition that they should work a certain part of their time on the land which

belonged to their lords. The average condition of these serfs was better than that of the chattel slaves. They could not be bought and sold personally, they were a part of the manor on which they lived, and they had as a class a tendency to become tenants by various processes. In one way or another these serfs got gradually emancipated, and during a transitional period, lasting through the two last centuries of the Middle Ages, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the labour classes were in a far better position than they had been before, and in some ways than they have been since; suffering more from spasmodic arbitrary violence than from chronic legal oppression. The transition from this period to our own days is one of the most interesting chapters of history; but it is impossible for me to touch on it here. All I can say is that the emancipated serfs formed one of the elements that went to make up our present middle class, and that a new class of workers grew up beneath them: men who were not owned by anyone, who were bound by no legal ties to such and such a manor, who might earn what livelihood they could for themselves under certain conditions, which I will presently try to lay before you, and which are most important to be considered; for this new class of so-called free labourers has become our modern working class.

Now it will be clear to you, surely, how much and how grievously both the classical period, with its chattel slavery, and the feudal system, with its serfdom, fell short of the society which we have set before us as reasonably successful. In each of them there was a class obviously freed from the necessity of labour by means of the degradation of another class which laboured excessively and reaped but a small reward for its excessive labour. Surely there was something radically wrong in these two societies. From the fact that labour is necessary for man's life on earth, and that nature yields her abundance to labour only, one would be inclined to deduce the probability that he who worked most would be the best off. But in these slave and serf societies the reverse was the case: the man of leisureless toil lived miserably, the man who did nothing useful lived abundantly. Then, again, as to our third test, was there no waste of labour? Yes, indeed, there was waste most grievous. I have said that the slave-owner or the lord of the manor did nothing useful, and yet he did something; he was bound to do something, for he was often energetic, gifted, full of character; he made war ceaselessly, consuming thereby the wealth which his slaves or his serfs created, and forcing them to work the more grievously. Here was waste enough, and lack of organisation of labour.

Well, all this people find no great difficulty in seeing, and few would like, publicly at least, to confess a regret for these conditions of labour, although in private some men, less hypocritical or more logical than the bulk of reactionists, admit that they consider the society of cultivated men and chattel slaves the best possible for weak human nature. Yet though we can see what has been, we cannot so easily see what is; and I admit that it is especially hard for people in our civilisation, with its general freedom from the ruder forms of violence, its orderly routine life, and, in short, all that tremendous organisation whose very perfection of continuity prevents us from noticing it—I say it is hard for people under the quiet order and external stability of modern society to note that much the same thing is going on in the relations of employers to the employed as went on under the slave society of Athens or under the self-sustained baronage of the thirteenth century.

For I assert that with us, as with the older societies, those who work hardest fare the worst; those who produce the least get the most; while as to the waste of labour that goes on, the waste of times past is as nothing compared with what is wasted to-day.

I must now justify this view of mine, and, if possible, get you to agree with it by pointing out to you how society at the present day is constituted.

Now, as always, there are only two things essential to the production of wealth, labour, and raw material: everyone can labour who is not sick or in nonage, therefore everyone except those, if he can get at raw material, can produce wealth; but without that raw material he cannot produce anything—anything, that is, that man can live upon; and if he does not labour he must live at the cost of those that do; unless, therefore, everyone can get at the raw material and instruments of production, the community in general will be burdened by the expense of so many useless mouths, and the sum of its wealth will be less than it ought to be. But in our civilised society to-day the raw material and the instruments of production are monopolised by a comparatively small number of persons, who will not allow the general population to use them for production of wealth unless they pay them tribute for doing so; and since they are able to exact this tribute, they themselves are able to live without producing, and consequently are a burden on society. Nor are these monopolists content with exacting a bare livelihood from the producers, as mere vagabonds and petty thieves do; they are able to get from the producers in all cases an abundant livelihood, including most of the enjoyments and advantages of civilisation, and in

many cases a position of such power that they are practically independent of the community and almost out of reach of its laws, although, indeed, the greater part of those laws were made for the purpose of upholding this monopoly; and wherever necessary they do now use the physical force, which, by one means or another, they have under their control, for such upholding.

These monopolists, or capitalists, as one may call them broadly (for I will not at present distinguish the land capitalists from the money capitalists), are in much the same position as the slave-owners of ancient Greece and Rome, or the serf-masters of the thirteenth century; but they have this advantage over them, that though really they sustain their position by mere compulsion, just as the earlier masters did, that compulsion is not visible as the compulsion of the earlier times was; and it is very much their business to prevent it becoming visible, as may well be imagined. But as I am against monopoly and in favour of freedom, I must try to get you to see it, since seeing it is the first step towards feeling it, which, in its turn, is sure to lead to your refusing to bear it.

I have spoken of the tribute which the capitalists exact as the price of the use of those means of production which should be as free to all as the air we breathe is, since they are as necessary to our existence as it is: how do they exact the tribute? They are, to start with, in a good position, you see, because even without anyone's help they could use the labour-power in their own bodies on the raw material they have, and so earn their livelihoood; but they are not contented with that, as I hinted above—they are not likely to be, because their position, legalised and supported by the whole physical force of the State, enables them "to do better for themselves," as the phrase goes; they can use the labour-power of the disinherited, and force them to keep them without working for production. Those disinherited, however, they must keep alive to labour, and they must allow them also opportunity for breeding—these are necessities that pressed equally on the ancient slave-owner or the mediæval lord of the manor, or, indeed, that press on the owner of draught cattle; they must at least do for the workers as much as for a machine—supply them with fuel to enable them to work. Nor need they do more if they are dealing with men who have no power of resistance. But these machines are human ones, instinct with desires and passions, and therefore, they cannot help trying to better themselves; and they cannot better themselves except at the expense of the masters, because whatever they produce more than the bare necessaries of life the masters will at once take from them if they can; therefore they

have always resisted the full exercise of the privilege of the masters, and have tried to raise their standard of livelihood above the mere subsistence limit. Their resistance has taken various forms, from peaceful strikes to open war, but it has always been going on, and the masters, when not driven into a corner, have often yielded to it, although unwillingly enough; but it must be said that mostly the workers have claimed little more than mere slaves would, who might mutiny for a bigger ration. For, in fact, this wage paid by our modern master is nothing more than the ration of the slave in another form; and when the masters have paid it, they are free to use all the rest that the workers produce, just as the slave-owner takes all that the slave produces. Remember at this point, therefore, that everything more than bare subsistence which the workers gain to-day they gain by carrying on constant war with their masters. I must add that their success in this war is often more apparent than real; that too often it means little more than shifting the burden of extreme poverty from one group of workers to another; the unskilled labourers, of whom the supply is unlimited, do not gain by it, and their numbers have a tendency to increase, as the masters, driven to their shifts, use more elaborate machines in order to dispense with skilled labour, and also use the auxiliary labour of women and children, to whom they do *not* pay subsistence wages, thereby keeping down the wages of the head of the family, and depriving him and them of the mutual help and comfort in the household which would otherwise be gained from them.

Thus, then, the capitalists, by means of their monopoly of the means of production, compel the worker to work for less than his due share of the wealth which he produces—that is, for less than he produces. He must work, he will die else; and as they are in possession of the raw material, he must agree to the terms they enforce upon him. This is the "free contract" of which we hear so much, and which, to speak plainly, is a capitalist lie. There is no way out of this "freedom" save rebellion of some kind or other: strike rebellion, which impoverishes the workers for the time, whether they win the strike or lose it; or the rebellion of open revolt, which will be put down always until it is organised for a complete change in the basis of society.

Now to show you another link or two of the chain which binds the workers. There is one thing which hampers this constant struggle of the workers towards bettering their condition at the expense of their masters, and that is competition for livelihood amongst them. I have told you that unskilled labour is practically unlimited; and machines, the employment of women and

children, long hours of work, and all that cheapening of production so much bepraised now, bring about this state of things, that even in ordinary years there are more hands than there is work to give them. This is the great instrument of compulsion of modern monopoly; people undersell one another in our modern slave market, so that the employers have no need to use any visible instrument of compulsion in driving them towards work; and the invisibility of this whip, the fear of death by starvation, has so muddled people's brains that you can hear men, otherwise intelligent, *e.g.*, answering objections to the uselessness of some occupation by saying, "But you see it gives people employment," although they would see that if three of them had to dig a piece of ground, and one of them knocked off, and was "employed" in throwing chuckie stones into the water, the other two would have to do his share of the work as well as their own.

Another invisible link of the chain is this, that the workman does not really know his own master; the individual employer may be and often is on good terms with his men, and really unconscious of the war between them, although he cannot fail to know that if he pays more wages to his men than other employers in the same line of business as himself do, he will be beaten by them. But the workman's real master is not his immediate employer but his *class*, which will not allow even the best intentioned employer to treat his men otherwise than as profit-grinding machines. By his profit, made out of the unpaid labour of his men, the manufacturer must live, unless he gives up his position and learns to work like one of his own men, which indeed, as a rule, he could not do, as he has usually not been taught to do any useful work; therefore, as I have said, he must reduce his wages to the lowest point he can, since it is on the margin between his men's production and their wages that his profit depends; his class, therefore, compel his workmen to accept as little as possible. But further, the workman is a consumer as well as a producer, and in that character he has not only to pay rent to a landlord (and far heavier proportionately than rich people have to pay), and also a tribute to the middleman who lives without producing, and without doing service to the community, by passing money from one pocket to another; but he also has to pay (as consumer) the profits of the other manufacturers who superintend the production of the goods he uses. Again, as a mere member of society, a should-be citizen, he has to pay taxes, and a great deal more than he thinks; he has to pay for wars, past, present, and future, that were and are never meant to benefit him, but to force markets for his masters, nay, to keep him from rebellion, from taking his

own at some date; he has also to pay for the thousand and one idiocies of parliamentary government, and ridiculous monarchical and official state; for the mountain of precedent, nonsense, and chicanery with *its* set of officials, whose business it is under the name of law to prevent justice being done to any one. In short, in one way or another, when he has by dint of constant labour got his wages into his pocket, he has them taken away from him again by various occult methods, till it comes to this at last, that he really works an hour for one-third of an hour's pay, while the two-thirds go to those who have not produced the wealth which they consume.

Here, then, as to the first and second conditions of a reasonable society. 1st, That the labour should be duly apportioned. 2nd, That the wealth should be duly apportioned. Our society does not merely fail in them, but positively inverts them; with us those who consume most produce least; those who produce most consume least.

There yet remains something to be said on the third condition of a fair state of society, that it should look to it that labour be not wasted. How does civilisation fare in that respect? I have told you that war was the occupation of the ancient slaveholders, set free by slave-labour from the necessity of producing; similarly, the mediæval baron, set free from the necessity of producing by the labour of the serfs, who tilled his lands for him, occupied himself with fighting for more serf-tilled land either for himself or his suzerain. In our own days we see that there is a class freed from the necessity of producing by the tribute paid by the wage-earner; what does *our* free class do, how does it occupy the life-long leisure which it forces toil to yield to it?

Well, it chiefly occupies itself in war like those earlier non-producing classes, and very busy it is over it. I know indeed that there is a certain portion of the dominant class that does not pretend to do anything at all, except perhaps a little amateur reactionary legislation; yet even of that group I have heard that some of them are very busy in their estate offices trying to make the most of their special privilege, the monopoly of the land; and taking them altogether they are not a very large class. Of the rest some are busy in taxing us and repressing our liberties directly, as officers in the army and navy, magistrates, judges, barristers, and lawyers; they are the salaried officers on the part of the masters in the great class struggle. Other groups there are, as artists and literary men, doctors, schoolmasters, etc., who occupy a middle position between the producers and the non-producers; they are doing useful service, and ought to be doing

It for the community at large, but practically they are only working for a class, and in their present position are little better than hangers-on of the non-producing class, from whom they receive a share of their privilege, together with a kind of contemptuous recognition of their position as gentlemen—heaven save the mark! But the great mass of the non-producing classes are certainly not idle in the ordinary sense of the word; they could not be, for they include men of great energy and force of character, who would, as all reasonable men do, insist on some serious or exciting occupation; and I say once again their occupation is war, though it is "writ large," and called competition. They are, it is true, called organisers of labour; and sometimes they do organise it, but when they do they expect an extra reward for so doing outside their special privilege. A great many of them, though they are engaged in the war, sit at home at ease and let their generals —their salaried managers, to wit—wage it for them. I am meaning here shareholders or sleeping partners; but whenever they are active in business they are really engaged in organising the war with their competitors, the capitalists in the same line of business as themselves; and if they are to be successful in that war, they must not be sparing of destruction, either of their own or other people's goods; nay, they not unseldom are prepared to further the war of sudden, as opposed to that of lingering death, and of late years they have involved pretty nearly the whole of Europe in attacks on barbarian or savage peoples, which are only distinguishable from sheer piracy by their being carried on by nations instead of individuals. But all that is only by the way; it is the ordinary and necessary outcome of their operations that there should be periodical slackness of trade following on times of inflation, from the fact that everyone tries to get as much as he can of the market to himself at the expense of everyone else, so that sooner or later the market is sure to be overstocked, so that wares are sold sometimes at less than the cost of production, which means that so much labour has been wasted on them by misdirection. Nor is that all; for they are obliged to keep an army of clerks and such like people, who are not necessary either for the production of goods or their distribution, but are employed in safe-guarding their masters' interests against their masters' competitors. The waste is further increased by the necessity of these organisers of the commercial war for playing on the ignorance and gullibility of the consumers by two processes, which in their perfection are specialities of the present century, and even, it may be said, of this latter half of it—to wit, adulteration and puffery. It would be hard to say how

much ingenuity and painstaking have been wasted on these incidents in the war of commerce, and I am wholly unable to get any statistics of them: but we all know that an enormous amount of labour is spent on them, which is at the very best as much wasted as if those engaged on them were employed in digging a hole and filling it up again.

But further; there is yet another source of waste involved in our present society. The grossly unequal distribution of wealth forces the rich to get rid of their surplus money by means of various forms of folly and luxury, which means further waste of labour. Do not think I am advocating asceticism. I wish us all to make the utmost of what we can obtain from nature to make us happier and more contented while we live; but apart from reasonable comfort and real refinement, there is, as I am sure no one can deny, a vast amount of sham wealth and sham service created by our miserable system of rich and poor, which makes no human being the happier, on the one hand, while on the other it withdraws vast numbers of workers from the production of real utilities, and so casts a heavy additional burden of labour on those who are producing them. I have been speaking hitherto of a producing and a non-producing class, but I have been quite conscious all the time that though the first class produces whatever wealth is created, a very great portion of it is prevented from producing wealth at all, are being set to nothing better than turning a wheel that grinds nothing—save the workers' lives. Nay, worse than nothing. I hold that this sham wealth is not merely a negative evil (I mean in itself), but a positive one. It seems to me that the refined society of to-day is distinguished from all others by a kind of gloomy cowardice—a stolid but timorous incapacity of enjoyment. He who runs may read the record of the unhappy rich not less than that of the unhappy poor in the futility of their amusements, and the degradation of their art and literature.

Well, then, the third condition of a reasonable society is violated by our present so called society; the tremendous activity, energy, and invention of modern times is to a great extent wasted; the monopolists force the workers to waste a great part of their labour power, while they waste almost the whole of theirs. Our society, therefore, does not fulfil the true functions of society. Now, the constitution of all society requires that each individual member of it should yield up a part of his liberty in return for the advantages of mutual help and defence; yet at bottom that surrender should be part of the liberty itself; it should be voluntary in essence. But if society does not fulfil it duties towards the individual, it wrongs him, and no man voluntarity submits to wrong—nay, no

man ought to. The society, therefore, that has violated the essential conditions of its existence must be sustained by *mere* brute force, and that is the case with our modern society no less than that of the ancient slave-holding and the mediæval serf-holding societies. As a practical deduction, I ask you to agree with me that such a society should be changed from its base up, if it be possible. And further, I must ask how, by what, and by whom, such a revolution can be accomplished? But before I set myself to deal with these questions, I will ask you to believe that though I have tried to argue the matter on first principles, I do not approach the subject from a pedantic point of view. If I could believe that, however wrong it may be in theory, our present system works well in practice, I should be silenced. If I thought that its wrongs and anomalies were so capable of palliation that people generally were not only contented, but were capable of developing their human faculties duly under it, and that we were on the road to progress without a great change, I for one would not ask anyone to meddle with it. But I do not believe that, nor do I know of any thoughtful person that does. In thoughtful persons I can see but two attitudes; on the one hand, the despair of pessimism, which I admit is common, and on the other a desire and hope of change. Indeed, in years like these few last, when one hears on all sides and from all classes of what people call depression of trade, which, as we too well know, means misery at least as great as that which a big war bears with it, and when on all sides there is ominous grumbling of the coming storm, the workers unable to bear the extra burden laid upon them by the "bad times,"—in such years there is, I do not say no hope, but at least no hope except in those changes, the tokens which are all around us.

Therefore, again I ask how, or by what, or by whom, the necessary revolution can be brought about? What I have been saying hitherto has been intended to show you that there has always been a great class struggle going on which is still sustained by our class of monopoly and our class of disinheritance. It is true that in former times no sooner was one form of that class struggle over than another took its place; but in our days it has become much simplified, and has cleared itself by progress through its various stages of mere accidental circumstances. The struggle for political equality has come to an end, or nearly so; all men are (by a fiction it is true) declared to be equal before the law, and compulsion to labour for another's benefit has taken the simple form of the power of the possessor of money, who is all powerful; therefore, if, as we Socialists believe, it is certain that

the class struggle must one day come to an end, we are so much nearer to that end by the passing through of some of its necessary stages; history never returns on itself.

Now, you must not suppose, therefore, that the revolutionary struggle of to-day, though it may be accompanied (and necessarily) by violent insurrection, is paralleled by the insurrections of past times. A rising of the slaves of the ancient period, or of the serfs of the mediæval times, could not have been permanently successful, because the time was not ripe for such success, since the growth of the new order of things was not sufficiently developed. It is indeed a terrible thought that, although the burden of injustice and suffering was almost too heavy to be borne in such insurrectionary times, and although all popular uprisings have right on their side, they could not be successful at the time, because there was nothing to put in the place of the unjust system against which men were revolting. And yet it is true, and it explains the fact that the class antagonism is generally more felt when the oppressed class is bettering its condition than when it is at its worst. The consciousness of oppression then takes the form of hope, and leads to action, and is indeed the token of the gradual formation of a new order of things underneath the old decaying order.

I told you that I was not prepared to give you any details of the arrangement of a new state of society; but I am prepared to state the principles on which it would be founded, and the recognition of which would make it easy for serious men to deal with the details of arrangement. Socialism asserts that everyone should have free access to the means of production of wealth—the raw material and the stored-up force produced by labour; in other words, the land, plant, and stock of the community, which are now monopolised by certain privileged persons, who force others to pay for their use. This claim is founded on the principle which lies at the bottom of Socialism, that the right to the possession of wealth is conferred by the possessor having worked towards its production, and being able to use it for the satisfaction of his personal needs. The recognition of this right will be enough to guard against mere confusion and violence. The claim to property on any other grounds must lead to what is in plain terms robbery; which will be no less robbery because it is organised by a sham society, and must no less be supported by violence because it is carried on under the sanction of the law.

Let me put this with somewhat more of detail. No man has made the land of the country, nor can he use more than a small portion of it for his personal needs; no man has made more than

a small portion of its fertility, nor can use personally more than a small part of the results of the labour of countless persons, living and dead, which has gone to produce that fertility. No man can build a factory with his own hands, or make the machinery in it, nor can he use it, except in combination with others. He may call it his, but he cannot make any use of it as his alone, unless he is able to compel other people to use it for his benefit; this he does not do personally, but our sham society has so organised itself that by its means he can compel this unpaid service from others. The magistrate, the judge, the policeman, and the soldier are the sword and pistol of this modern highwayman, and I may add that he is also furnished with what he can use as a mask under the name of morals and religion.

Now if these means of production, the land, plant, and stock, were really used for their primary uses, and not as means for extracting unpaid labour from others, they would be used by men working in combination with each other, each of whom would receive his due share of the results of that combined labour; the only difficulty would then be what would be his due share, because it must be admitted on all hands that it is impossible to know how much each individual has contributed towards the production of a piece of co-operative labour. But the principle once granted that each man should have his due share of what he has created by his labour, the solution of the difficulty would be attempted, nay, is now hypothetically attempted, in various ways—in two ways mainly. One view is that the State—that is, society organised for the production and distribution of wealth—would hold all the means of the production and distribution of wealth in its hands, allowing the use of them to whomsoever it thought could use them, charging rent, perhaps, for their use, but which rent would be used again only for the benefit of the whole community, and therefore would return to the worker in another form. It would also take on itself the organisation of labour in detail, arranging the how, when, and where for the benefit of the public; doing all this, one must hope, with as little centralisation as possible; in short, the State, according to this view, would be the only employer of labour. No individual would be able to employ a workman to work for him at a profit, *i.e.*, to work for less than the value of his labour (roughly estimated), because the State would pay him the full value of it; nor could any man let land or machinery at a profit, because the State would let it without the profit. It is clear that, if this could be carried out, no one could live without working. When a man had spent the wealth he had earned

personally, he would have to work for more, as there would be no tribute coming to him from the labour of past generations. On those terms he could not accumulate wealth, nor would he desire to; for he could do nothing with it except satisfy his personal needs with it, whereas at present he can turn the superfluity of his wealth into capital, *i.e.*, wealth used for the extraction of profit. Thus society would be changed. Everyone would have to work for his livelihood, and everybody would be able to do so, whereas at present there are people who refuse to work for their livelihood and forbid others to do so. Labour would not be wasted, as there would be no competing employers gambling in the market and using the real producer and the consumer as their milch cows. The limit of price would be the cost of production, so that buying and selling would be simply the exchange of equivalent values, and there would be no loss on either side in the transaction. Thus there would be a society in which everyone would have an equal chance for well-doing, for, as a matter of course, arrangements would be made for the sustaining of people in their nonage, for keeping them in comfort if they were physically incapacitated from working, and also for educating everyone according to his capacities. This would at the least be a society which would try to perform those functions of seeing that everyone did his due share of work and no more, and had his due share of wealth and no less, and that no labour was wasted, which I have said were the real functions of a true society.

But there is another view of the solution of the difficulty as to what constitutes the due share of the wealth created by labour. Those who take it say, since it is not really possible to find out what proportion of combined labour each man contributes, why profess to try to do so? In a properly ordered community, all work that is done is necessary on the one hand, and on the other there would be plenty of wealth in such a community to satisfy all reasonable needs. The community holds all wealth in common, but has the same right to holding wealth that the individual has, namely, the fact that it has created it and uses it; but as a community it can only use wealth by satisfying with it the needs of every one of its members—it is not a true community if it does less than this—but their needs are not necessarily determined by the kind or amount of work which each man does, though of course, when they are, that must be taken into account. To say the least of it, men's needs are much more equal than their mental or bodily capacities are: their ordinary needs, granting similar conditions of climate and the like, are

pretty much the same, and could, as above said, be easily satisfied. As for special needs for wealth of a more special kind, reasonable men would be contented to sacrifice the thing which they needed less for that which they needed more; and for the rest the varieties of temperament would get over the difficulties of this sort. As to the incentives to work, it must be remembered that even in our sham society most men are not disinclined to work, so only that their work is not that which they are compelled to do; and the higher and more intellectual the work is, the more men are resolved to do it, even in spite of obstacles. In fact, the ideas on the subject of the reward of labour in the future are founded on its position in the present. Life is such a terrible struggle for the majority that we are all apt to think that a specially gifted person should be endowed with more of that which we are all compelled to struggle for—money, to wit—and to value his services simply by that standard. But in a state of society in which all were well-to-do, how could you reward extra services to the community? Give your good worker immunity from work? The question carries with it the condemnation of the idea, and, moreover, that will be the last thing he will thank you for. Provide for his children? The fact that they are human beings with a capacity for work is enough; they are provided for in being members of a community which will see that they neither lack work nor wealth. Give him more wealth? Nay, what for? What can he do with more than he can use? He cannot eat three dinners a day, or sleep in four beds. Give him domination over other men? Nay, if he be more excellent than they are in any art, he must *influence* them for his good and theirs if they are worth anything; but if you make him their arbitrary master, he will govern them, but he will not influence them; he and they will be enemies, and harm each other mutually. One reward you can give him, that is, opportunity for developing his special capacity; but that you will do for everybody, and not the excellent only. Indeed, I suppose he will not, if he be excellent, lack the admiration, or perhaps it is better to say the affection, of his fellow men, and he will be all the more likely to get that when the relations between him and them are no longer clouded by the fatal gift of mastership.

Moreover, those who see this view of the new society believe that decentralisation in it would have to be complete. The political unit with them is not a Nation, but a Commune; the whole of reasonable society would be a great federation of such communes, federated for definite purposes of the organisation of

livelihood and exchange. For a mere nation is the historical deduction from the ancient tribal family in which there was peace between the individuals composing it and war with the rest of the world. A nation is a body of people kept together for purposes of rivalry and war with other similar bodies, and when competition shall have given place to combination, the function of the nation will be gone.

I will recapitulate, then, the two views taken among Socialists as to the future of society. According to the first, the State—that is, the nation organised for unwasteful production and exchange of wealth—will be the sole possessor of the national plant and stock, the sole employer of labour, which she will so regulate in the general interest that no man will ever need to fear lack of employment and due earnings therefrom. Everybody will have an equal chance of livelihood, and, except as a rare disease, there would be no hoarding of money or other wealth. This view points to an attempt to give everybody the full worth of the productive work done by him, after having ensured the necessary preliminary that he shall always be free to work.

According to the other view, the centralised nation would give place to a federation of communities who would hold all wealth in common, and would use that wealth for satisfying the needs of each member, only exacting from each that he should do his best according to his capacity towards the production of the common wealth. Of course, it is to be understood that each member is absolutely free to use his share of wealth as he pleases, without interference from any, so long as he really uses it, that is, does not turn it into an instrument for the oppression of others. This view intends complete equality of condition for everyone, though life would be, as always, varied by the differences of capacity and disposition; and emulation in working for the common good would supply the place of competition as an incentive.

These two views of the future of society are sometimes opposed to each other as Socialisn and Communism, but to my mind the latter is simply the necessary development of the former, which implies a transition period, during which people would be getting rid of the habits of mind bred by the long ages of tyranny and commercial competition, and be learning that it is to the interest of each that all should thrive.

When men had lost the fear of each other engendered by our system of artificial famine, they would feel that the best way of avoiding the waste of labour would be to allow every man to take what he needed from the common store, since he would have

no temptation or opportunity of doing anything with a greater portion than he really needed for his personal use. Thus would be minimised the danger of the community falling into bureaucracy, the multiplication of boards and offices, and all the paraphernalia of official authority, which is, after all, a burden, even when it is exercised by the delegation of the whole people and in accordance with their wishes.

Thus have I laid before you, necessarily briefly, a Socialist's view of the present condition of labour and its hopes for the future. If the indictment against the present society seem to you to be of undue proportions compared with the view of that which is to come, I must again remind you that we Socialists never dream of building up by our own efforts in one generation a society altogether anew. All I have been attacking has been the exercise of arbitrary authority for the supposed benefit of a privileged class. When we have got rid of that authority and are free once more, we ourselves shall do whatever may be necessary in organising the real society which even now exists under the authority which usurps that title. That true society of loved and lover, parent and child, friend and friend, the society of well-wishers, of reasonable people conscious of the aspirations of humanity and of the duties we owe to it through one another—this society, I say, is held together and exists by its own inherent right and reason, in spite of what is usually thought to be the cement of society, arbitrary authority to wit, that is to say, the expression of brute force under the influence of unreasoning habit. Unhappily though society exists, it is in an enslaved and miserable condition, because that same arbitrary authority says to us practically: "You may be happy if you can afford it, but, unless you have a certain amount of money you shall not be allowed the exercise of the social virtues; sentiment, affection, good manners, intelligence even, to you shall be mere words; you shall be less than men, because you are needed as machines to grind on in a system which has come upon us we scarce know how, and which compels us as well as you. This is the real, continuously-repeated proclamation of law and order to the most part of men who are under the burden of that hierarchy of compulsion which governs us under the usurped and false title of society, and which all true Socialists or supporters of real society are bound to do their best to get rid of, so as to leave us free to realise to the full that true society which means well-being and well-doing for one and all.

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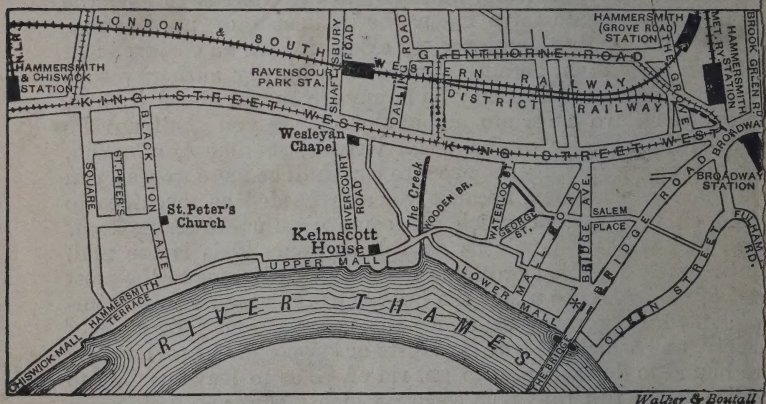

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